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THE HORSE IN ANCIENT IRAN.*

Read on—30th January 1895.
President—MR. KHARSETJI RUSTAMJI CAMA.

ANCIENT IRAN, *i.e.*, the whole of Central Asia, once ruled over by the ancient Persians, is believed by many to be the first home of the horse. Again, as Sir Robert Kerr Porter says: "We have ample testimony from the old historians, that the best cavalry of the East were derived from this part (Siahdan in Persia) of the great Empire of Persia; and the native breed were so highly prized above all others, that Alexander considered a Median horse as the most royal gift he could bestow; and the kings of Parthia chose the same, as the most costly sacrifices they could lay upon the altar of their gods." (Vol. I., p. 271.) According to the same Author (II., p. 206), "the extensive and fertile valleys stretching through Harounabad to Mahadesht were included in the ancient name of the Nissæn plains, and formed the celebrated pastures noted by Arrian, as the nursery of the most esteemed breed of Median horses. Their beauty, spirit and swiftness were the admiration of the East."[1]

Again, Iran is also believed to be the home of horse-racing which spread from there into Europe. Chariot-races played an important part in the Mithraic festivals that were celebrated in honour of *Khorshed* and *Meher, i.e.*, the Sun and Mithras, the angel of light. The Olympic games of Greece took their chariot-races from these Mithraic festivals of Persia. When Rome took its Mithraic worship from Greece, it seems also to have taken its horse-racing from that country. According to Plutarch, chariot-racing was first held in Rome

* Journal, Vol. IV., No. 1, pp. 1-14.

[1] According to Herodotus (Bk. III, 106), the Nisæn horses of Media were considered to be the best (Rawlinson's Herodotus Vol. II, p. 495). *Vide* Rawlinson's Herodotus, Note 6 on Bk. VII, ch. 40, Vol. IV, p. 41.

in the time of Pompey and that was in honour of Mithras. With their invasion the Romans are believed to have introduced into England their well-known chariot-races. Thus, we find that, though England is now prominent in horse-racing, ancient Irân was the country where it first began.

Herodotus, the father of history, says of the ancient Persians that "Beginning from the age of five years to twenty, they instruct their sons in three things; to ride, to use the bow, and to speak truth[1] [Bk. I, chap. 136]." According to Zenophon, horsemanship was established among the ancient Persians by the law of reputation (Ashbey's translation of Zenophon p. 171).

It appears, then, that of all animals, the horse was a special favourite of an ancient Persian from his very young age. He was, as it were, a member of the family of an ancient Zoroastrian, who not only prayed for himself and his family, but also for his horse. While praying to Mithra, an ancient Persian, before asking for strength to himself, asked for strength to his horse (Yt. X, 11). He, whose prayers were accepted by Ashi Vanghui, had the good fortune of having "swift and loud neighing horses" (Yt. XVII—12), and of being the proud possessor of 1,000 horses (XVIII—5). The Fravashis, or the holy spirits of the dear departed ones, in return for their being gratefully remembered, by their surviving relatives, blessed them with a gift of swift horses and strong chariots (Yt. XIII—52). The Kayânian prince Tusa prayed to Ardviçura for strength to his horse (Yt. V—53). King Kaikhusru prayed to the same Yazata to be the fortunate possessor of the best of all horses (Yt. V—50).

Similarly king Vishtâsp was the fortunate possessor of the Asp-i-Siah which is spoken of by the *Dinkard* as the best of all horses in the world (West's Dinkard, Bk. IX., ch. 22—2 S. B. E., Vol. XXXVII., p. 220). It was the miraculous restoration to health of this favourite horse of the king

[1] Carry translation (1889), p. 61.

that regained for the prophet, as later traditions say, the royal favour which he had more than lost through the evil machinations of his calumniators. According to the *Dinkard*, the ancient Iranians had special veterinary surgeons for the horse.[1] It was a great sin for a man to treat that animal carelessly even while training it. They had special rules and regulations set down in one of their Nashks for the selection of a horse, for training him, and for a proper distribution of food to him. The horse, that was so dear to the ancient Persians, was believed to bless his fortunate master, if he treated him well and to curse him if he treated him harshly. His curse to his master, who did not feed him well and exacted too much work from him, was, "May you never yoke swift horses. May you never ride swift horses. May you never control swift horses" (Yaçna, XI—2). All these references in the Avesta and in the ancient Pahlavi books, justify the observations of a traveller like Ker Porter, who says that "from the earliest time, the breeding of fine horses has been a passion in the East, and in no country more than Persia" (Ker Porter's travels in Georgia, Persia, &c., Vol. II., p. 43). The Pahlavi Bundehesh traces the origin or the evolution of the horse from the ox. It divides all animals into three classes. I. Animals that graze in the valley. II. Those that live in the mountains. III. Aquatic animals. Of these three classes, the horse belongs to the first class. This class is again divided into two kinds (âinineh). Those with cloven feet and those that are ass-footed. Of these two, the horse belongs to the second genus. It mentions eight species of horses.[2] All animals of good-creation have their opponents in the list of the animals of evil-creation. So, the genus to which horse, which is the animal of the good-creation, belongs, has, as its opponent, the snake, which is the creation of the evil spirit Ahriman. Thus, the snake is hostile to the horse

[1] Dinkard, Bk, VIII, chap. 26. S. B. E., Vol. XXXVII, pp. 86-87.
[2] S. B. E., V. ch. XIV. 8-6.

and the horse to the snake.[1] This reminds us of the story in Herodotus, which represents the Persian horses of the time of Crœsus, as feeding on snakes. In the reign of the Lydian king Crœsus, says Herodotus,[2] "All the suburbs of Sardis were found to swarm with snakes, on the appearance of which, the horses left feeding in the pasture grounds and flocked to the suburbs to eat them. The king who witnessed the unusual sight regarded it very rightly as a prodigy. He, therefore, instantly sent messengers to the soothsayers of Telmessus to consult them upon the matter. His messengers reached the city, and obtained from the Telmassians an explanation of what the prodigy portended, but fate did not allow them to inform their lord; for ere they entered Sardis, on their return, Crœsus was a prisoner. What the Telmassians had declared was, that, Crœsus must look for the entry of an enemy of foreign invaders into his country, and that, when they came they would subdue the native inhabitants, since the snake, said they, is a child of earth and the horse a warrior and a foreigner."

The Shâyast la Shâyast prohibits the killing of war-horses for animal food (chap. X. 9 S. B. E., Vol. V., p. 319), but Herodotus makes no exception, when he says of the birthday festivals of the Persians of his time, that "the richer Persians cause an ox, a horse, a camel, and an ass to be baked whole, and so served up to them."[3]

Strength, speed, docility and nobleness of character were the chief characteristics that endeared a horse to an ancient Iranian. We will speak of some of these characteristics.

An ancient Persian looked as much for strength as for speed in his horse. The best mode of trying the strength was to press down the back of the animal with the hand. If the animal gave way under the pressure and bent down to the

[1] Bundehesh XIX 26., S. B. E., Vol. V, p. 72.

[2] Rawlinson's Herodotus, Vol. I., p. 217., Bk. I., ch. 78.

[3] Rawlinson's Herodotus, Vol. I., p. 273, Bk. I., ch. 133.

ground, the rider rejected it as unfit to carry his weight. Firdousi refers to this mode, when he says that "Every horse that Rustam drew towards himself, and over the back of which he pressed his hand, bent down under his strength and touched the earth with his belly."[1] Sohrab also used a similar mode to try the stregnth of his horse. "He placed his trying hand on the back of the horse, when his (the horse's) belly bent down to the ground."[2] Even in modern Persia, horse-racing is patronised by the Shah, more with the object of trying the strength of the horse than his speed. Sir John Malcolm says: "The object (of horse-racing) is not so much to try the speed as the strength of the horses, and to discover those which can be depended on for long and rapid marches."[3] Sir Robert Ker Porter[4] says the same thing "I found, that swiftness over a certain portion of ground in a given time, was not, as with us, the object of a Persian race. The aim here, is to possess a breed of horses, so trained as to be able to go a regular rapid pace, under privation, and carrying any sort of weight, for a great many hours together; a sort of horse which is essential in this country, for the despatch of business, the swift march of armies, and often, in cases of military reverse, to save the lives of its great men."

The speed was the next characteristic of the horse that struck an ancient Iranian. He, therefore, in common with his other ancient Aryan brothers, named this swiftest of animals, "Aspa" (اسپ = अश्व = L. Equus), from the old Aryan root,

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1 بر اسپي کم رستم کشيدیش پيش
بم پشتش بيفساردي دست خويش
ز نيروي او پشت کردي بخم
نهادي بروي زمين بر شکم (Vuller's, Liber Regum I., p. 287.)

2 نهادي برو دست را آزمون
شکم بر زمين بر نهادي بدون Vuller's, Liber Regum I., p. 444.

3 History of Persia, Vol. II., p. 405, n.

4 Ker Porter's Travels in Georgia, Persia, &c. Vol. I, p. 335.

aç. (𐬀𐬯𐬀=अश= to go rapidly). The word means 'one who goes rapidly.'

It seems, that the speed of the horse was the cause which connected horse-racing with the festivals in honour of Mithras, the god of Light. The primitive ancient Iranian, being much exposed to influences of Nature, and coming into greater contact with Nature, began to clothe the grandest of Nature's objects with the ideas most common to him on the surface of the earth. Just as he saw his swift horse cover long distances in a short time, he saw the sun go over the immense orb of heaven in a short time. So he gave to the sun, in his Avesta, the epithet of aurvat-aspa (𐬀𐬭𐬎𐬌-𐬀𐬯𐬱𐬀) *i.e.*, the swift-horsed. Having compared the swift going sun to his swift horse, he represented him going about in chariots. Meher Yasht, which treats of Mithras or Meher, the Yazata presiding over Light, is full of allusions which show the relation of horses and chariots with Mithras. Mithra gives swiftness to the horses (Yt. X, 3). He is worshipped by warriors riding on horses. They ask first swiftness for their horses and then strength to their bodies (Yt. X—11). Mithra yokes his horses to his chariots (Yt. X, 52). He drives a high-wheeled chariot (𐬵𐬀𐬎𐬎𐬀 𐬎𐬀𐬌𐬭𐬀-𐬱𐬀𐬭𐬀𐬎𐬀) which is drawn by beautiful white horses (Yt. X, 67, 68). The chariot is handsome, well decorated and golden. The horses are four in number.[1] They are white and all of exactly the same colour. Their fore feet are shod with gold and their hind ones with silver. They are yoked to the pole with metallic hooks (Yt. X, 125). There are other chariots on his right and on his left. His chariot is all armed with 1,000

[1] The four horses of Mithra, the god of Light, reminds us of the four horses of the sun among the ancient Greeks, *viz.*, Erythreus, Actéon, Lampros and Philogæus. These four horses represented the light of the sun when in the different parts of heaven, *viz.*, the light before the appearance of the sun over the horizon, the light after the sun-rise, the light at midday, and the light at sunset.

bows and arrows, spears, swords, maces and other implements of war. His chariot also moves on one wheel made of gold and drawn by four horses. Those who worshipped Mithra were blessed with beautiful chariots.

All these allusions tend to show, that the velocity of the apparent motion of the sun was compared to the speed of the horse, and that he was represented as moving in chariots drawn by horses. This comparison being so close, it is quite natural that on Mithraic festivals, held in honour of the sun and his light, horse-racing took a prominent part among the ancient Iranians.

Now, this question of horse and chariot-racing leads us to the question, referred to by Canon Taylor in his work, "The Origin of the Aryans" (p. 161), whether the horse was first used for drawing chariots or for riding. He thinks that it was first used for driving. Mr. William Ridgeway, in an article on the subject in the "Academy" of 3rd January 1891, comes to the same conclusion from various considerations. He attributes the reason to the fact, that "at first the horse was very small and incapable of carrying men, and that it was after generations of domestication under careful feeding and breeding that the horse became of sufficient size to carry man on his back with ease." According to Prof. Max Müller, it appears from the Vedas, that in ancient India, the horse was put to the use, both of chariot-drawing and riding. Zenophon represents the ancient Persians of the time of Cyrus the younger, as using the horse both for riding and for driving in the chariots (Anabasis, Bk. I. ch. 8-7, 10). From what is stated of the horse in the Avesta, we find that, though both riding and driving in the chariot are spoken of in the Avesta, the latter seems to precede the former.

The order, in which the different uses, the horse was put to, are spoken of in the Avesta, suggests that the horse was first used for drawing chariots and then for riding. The warrior used him in a chariot while fighting, before he began to ride him.

The very Avestic word for a warrior is a linguistic proof in support of this. He is called a Ratha-eshtâr (𐬫𐬀𐬞𐬀𐬑𐬎𐬀𐬭) *i.e.*, one standing in a *ratha* (𐬫𐬀𐬞𐬀) *i.e.*, a chariot. An enemy is represented as attacking his foe in a chariot (Yt. VIII, 56; XIV, 48).

Again, the fact referred to above, *viz.*, that some of Nature's grandest objects, which, on account of their speed, are compared, by the early Iranians, with horses, are represented as moving in chariots and not on horseback, is another proof that the horse was first used for driving and then for riding. Besides Mithra, we find Ardviçura, the Yazata, presiding over rivers, represented as driving her chariot herself.

Some of the rivers of Persia derive their names from "aspa," *i.e.*, the horse, on account of their speed which was considered to be as great as that of the horse; for example, the river Hvaspa (𐬱𐬀𐬯𐬀𐬑𐬎𐬀) *i.e.*, the "good-horsed" (Yt. XIX, 67). Hvaspa is the Choaspes of the Greeks. In its Greek form, we find the word "aspa" (horse) still preserved. The ancient Persian not only named the swiftest of his river from the name of the swiftest of his animals, but also began to measure the lengths of his rivers from the number of days which a swift-going horse took to go over its whole length. For example, we find from the Ardviçura Niayish, that the length of one of the largest tributaries of the Ardviçura river is spoken of as that which it would take forty days for a rider on a swift horse to go over.

In the same way, Firdousi, the great Persian poet, speaks of the circumference of Âzer-Gushasp, the celebrated fire-temple of ancient Iran, as being "half the ride of an Arab horse" (Vuller's Liber Regum Shâhnameh, Vol. II., p. 761, l. 140). Wood, in his Journey to the Source of the Oxus (p. 223), says the same thing of the Uzkbeks, the modern occupants of a part of ancient Iran. They speak of the distance of a place

as "ek-doweedeh," *i.e.* one gallop. If you ask them, what time a certain operation would take, their reply is, the time occupied in galloping so many miles.

We learn from Zenophon's Retreat that "the ancient Persians used the swiftest of horses for post services." Hence, the saying, "the Persian post riders fly faster than the cranes." At ordinary speed, it took 100 days from Susa to Sardis, but the king's post took six or seven days."

Next to speed, the physical property of the horse most spoken of in the Avesta, is that of good sight. The horse was believed to possess the power to see, on the darkest and the most cloudy of nights, a hair lying on the ground and to distinguish whether the hair was of the tail or of the mane of a horse (Yt. XIV, 31). He distinguished such a hair even on a snowy and rainy night (Yt. XVI, 10). According to the Bundehesh (ch. XIX, 32), it was the Arab horse that possessed this extraordinary eyesight. Firdousi says of the Rakhsh of Rustam, that on a cloudy night, he saw from the distance of two farsangs an ant on a black saddle cloth.

The Vishtâsp Yasht (Yt. XXIV, 29) says of a horse of ancient Iran, that if a rider missed his way, an excellent horse soon found out the mistake, and, turning back from the wrong way, went along the right way.[1]

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[1] This characteristic of a good horse, *viz.*, a good powerful sight, is illustrated by the following passage in Sir Henry Layard's Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana and Babylonia (p. 291), which shows, that it is observed, even now, among horses of good breed. "We had to find our way through narrow and tortuous lanes to the 'musif' of Mustafa Kuli Khan . . . . But how were we to discover it, with no one to guide us in the darkness? Whilst we were hesitating one of the Arabs remembered that the mare he was riding had been with him two years before, when he had passed several days in Mustafa Kuli Khan's house. He was convinced that she would find it again, and giving the animal her halter, went before us. She picked her way carefully, stopping every now and then, as if to consider the turning she would take, when, at length, after traversing more than half the town, she stopped before an archway closed by a massive door. Her rider at once recognised it as that of Mustafa Kuli Khan's house."

The next characteristic of the Iranian horse, spoken of in old Persian books, is his docility, his nobleness of character, or his sympathy for his master. Poetic imagination gives that sympathy even a language or a power of expression. The following story of an Iranian horse, as given by Firdousi, is a touching instance of this noble characteristic of a Persian horse:—

Siâvash, an Iranian prince, had a very favourite horse, named Behezâd (بهزاد). When he knew, that owing to the evil machinations of Karsêwaz, the Turanian back-biter, his end was near, and that he was on the point of being put to death by his father-in-law Afrâsiâb, the king of Turan, he went to his favourite horse Behezâd, and taking off his saddle and bridle, set him free, and asked him to allow no one to ride him, except his son Kaikhusru, whose birth he expected.[1]

The horse wandered in the adjoining jungles for several years until the time when Kaikhusru came to age. When the Irânian nobles went to Firangiz, the wife of Siâvash, to take her son Kaikhusru for the throne of Iran, she, knowing the last wishes of her husband, directed Kaikhusru to the jungle, where the horse Behezâd was roaming. Kaikhusru took with him the old bridle and saddle of Behezâd which Siâvash had removed from his back a short time before he set him free. On seeing the troop of horses, in which, he was told, Behezâd always moved, he loudly called out his name. On hearing it the horse at once stopped. Kaikhusru showed him his old saddle and bridle which he soon recognised and allowed to be put on his back. This incident brought to the mind of the horse the memory of his former dear master, and he shed tears for his death which made Kaikhusru also weep. In the Âbân Yasht (Yt. V, 50), Kaikhusru among other

[1] Compare the words placed by Firdousi, the Homer of the East, in the mouth of his hero Siâvash (Vuller's Liber Regum, Shahnameh, II, 653) with those placed by Homer in the mouth of his hero Hector (Iliad VIII., ll. 226-239). Siavash's conversation with his horse reminds us of Hector's conversation with his horses.

things prays for an excellent horse. This allusion in the Âbân Yasht is explained by the above story from the Shâhnâmeh.[1]

"Now Xanthus, Æthon, Lampus! * urge the chase,
And thou, Podargus! prove thy generous race;
Be fleet, be fearless, this important day,
And all your master's well-spent care repay.
For this, high-fed, in plenteous stalls ye stand,
Served with pure wheat, and by a princess' hand;
For this my spouse, of great Aëtion's line,
So oft has steep'd the strengthening grain in wine.
Now swift pursue, now thunder uncontroll'd;
Give me to seize rich Nestor's shield of gold."

"Meantime, at distance from the scene of blood,
The pensive steeds† of great Achilles stood:
Their godlike master slain before their eyes,
They wept, and shared in human miseries.
In vain Automedon now shakes the rein,
Now plies the lash, and soothes and threats in vain;
Nor to the fight nor Hellespont they go,
Restive they stood, and obstinate in woe:
Still as a tombstone, never to be moved,
On some good man or woman unreproved
Lays its eternal weight; or fix'd, as stands
A marble courser by the sculptor's hands,
Placed on the hero's grave. Along their face
The big round drops coursed down with silent pace,
Conglobing on the dust. . . . .

. . . . . .

Nor Jove disdain'd to cast a pitying look,
While thus relenting to the steeds, he spoke:
'Unhappy coursers of immortal strain,
Exempt from age, and deathless, now in vain;

. . . . . .

. . . But cease to mourn:
For not by you shall Priam's son be borne.

. . . . . .

Ourself will swiftness to your nerves impart—
Ourself with rising spirits swell your heart."

Pope's Iliad, Bk. XVII., ll. 484-517.

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[1] Compare Firdousi's account of the grief of the horse Behezâd (Vuller's Liber Regum, Vol. II., p. 722) with Homer's account of the grief of the horses of Achilles.

* These horses and Balius are mentioned again in Bk. XVI., ll. 182-85.

† Xanthus and Balius (Bk. XVII., l. 182).

So dear and favourite was his horse to an Iranian, that he always considered him to be his great companion. Zâl said of his horse: "As long as I will live, my horse will be my companion and the vault of revolving heaven shall be my shelter."

To lose one's favourite horse in a battle, and to let him pass into the hands of an enemy, was, according to Firdousi, the greatest ignominy for a Persian hero.

According to Zenophon, a horse with a golden bridle was considered by the ancient Persians to be a very valuable gift for a distinguished person.

For all these valuable characteristics, the horse was such a great favourite with the ancient Iranians, that they derived their names also from horses. For example, the ancestors of Zoroaster had the following names, all derived from Aspa, *i.e.*, horse: Pourushaspa, Paitiraspa, Aurvataspa, Haechataspa.

Again we find the following Persian names (in Greek history) derived from Acpa (horse). Araspes (Avesta Airya-aspa, *i. e.*, having good horses). Aspamitras (a lover of horses). Aspathines (rich in horses; Av. Aspachana). Cranaspes (possessing active horses. Av. *kêrê*, to do). Damaspia (possessing tame horses. Av. *dam*, to become obedient). Hystaspes (possessor of horses, Av. Vishtasp *vid*, to acquire). Maspii (those having big horses). Otaspes (having a horse as swift as the wind). Pharnaspes (having excellent horses. Av. *fra*, forward). Prexaspes (abounding in horses, Av. Pourushaspa). Sataspes (having hundred horses). Zairaspes (having golden-coloured horses). (*Vide* Rawlinson's Herodotus, Appendix to Bk. VI., note A, Vol. III., p. 550 et seq.).

According to Firdousi, the first thing that an ancient Persian looked to, before going to war, was the selection of an excellent horse. If he belonged to a high and noble family, he had a troop of horses to make his selection from. In the forests adjoining large cities troops were bred and allowed to wander in a free savage state. When a would-be warrior wanted to select one for his use, the whole troop was driven before him,

and the man in charge of the breeding department drew the attention to the best of the lot, describing his descent, &c. He made his choice, and took the one he liked by throwing over a noose upon him. The hero then tried the strength of the horse by pressing down his back with his hand with all his might. The horse that gave way under the pressure was rejected as unfit for that particular hero. Horses were supposed to have auspicious and inauspicious marks. Firdousi says of the horses brought before Rustam :—

همه پیش رستم همی راندند
برو داغ شاهان همی خواندند

i.e., they drove all of them before Rustam and described the royal marks over them. Of all the horses with peculiar auspicious marks, Rustam chose one, named Rakhsh. Firdousi has immortalized this horse in his great epic as he has immortalized his master Rustam. No other horse could bear the weight of Rustam, and the Rakhsh allowed none but Rustam to ride over him. So, in order to render the services of this great hero useless for the cause of his country, his enemies very often tried to get his favourite horse stolen from him. Many a hard-fought battle was fought to get the possession of this valuable and auspicious horse. It will not be out of place here to give the poet's graphic description of this horse: "His eyes were dark and his tail raised. . . . . His hoof was strong like steel. His body from head to tail was spotted, as it were with the spots of red rose on saffron. On a dark night he could see from the distance of two farsangs an ant on a black saddle. In strength he was an elephant, in stature a camel, and in vigour a lion of Mount Bistoun."[1] Again, it appears from Firdousi, that to examine a horse and test his strength and power by means of his teeth, is a very old practice. Rustam tries his horse in this way. The Rakhsh was to Rustam, what Cæsar's celebrated horse was to his master. As Cæsar was the first to subdue his horse, so

[1] Vuller's Liber Regum, Vol. I., p. 287.

was Rustam fiest to subdue the Rakhsh. As Cæsar's horse allowed nobody to ride over him, so did Rustam's Rakhsh allow none. They say also of Alexander, that he was the first to break his favourite horse Bucephalus, in whose honour he built the town of Bucephalia, at his death, on the river Jhelum, at the spot where the horse died.

The horse being so great a favourite, he was, at one time, appointed an arbiter, as it were, of the fortunes of the rival claimants to the throne of Persia. According to Herodotus (Book III, 84-86), Darius and his six colleagues, when they killed the Magi, who, pretending to be the Persian Smerdis had ascended the throne of Persia, settled among themselves as to who should be the king of Persia. They resolved that "they would ride out together next morning into the skirts of the city, and he whose steed first neighed after the sun was up should have the kingdom."[1] By some contrivance, Æbares, the groom of Darius, made his master's horse neigh first after the rise of the sun, and so gained the throne of Persia for him. The story shows, that the horse of Darius, having a very delicate sense of smelling, smelled the presence of his mare and neighed first. They say, that to perpetuate the name of this favourite horse, Darius had raised a monument with a suitable inscription alluding to this event.

The great esteem in which the ancient Persians held their horses is inherited by the modern Persians to such a great extent that, according to Malcolm,[2] "the king's stable is deemed one of the most sacred of sanctuaries: this usage continues in force, during the present reign, a nobleman of the first rank, who had aspired to the throne, took refuge in the royal stable, and remained there till he obtained his pardon. The military tribes have always regarded this sanctuary with the most superstitious reverence. 'A horse,' they say, 'will never bear him to victory by whom it is violated.'" "In one

[1] Rawlinson's Herodotus, Vol. II, p. 478, Bk. III., ch. 84.
[2] History of Persia, Vol. II., p. 403.

Persian manuscript," continues Malcolm, "all the misfortunes of Nâdir Meerzâ, the grandson of Nâdir Shah, are attributed to his having violated the stable by putting to death a person who had taken refuge there. The same writer remarks: "the monarch or chief in whose stable a criminal takes refuge must feed him as long as he stays there; he must be slain the moment before he reaches it, or when he leaves it; but when there, a slave who has murdered his master cannot be touched. The place of safety is at the horse's head, and if that is tied up in the open air, the person who takes refuge is to touch the head-stall."[1]

M. Dubeux[2] affirms this, when he says, "Les écuries royales sont depuis longtemps un asile sacré. Cet usage subsiste tojours."

According to Herodotus (I. 132) horse flesh formed a dish in birth-day feasts. Firdousi also refers to the use of horses' flesh as food among the ancient Persians, Asfandyar in his feast to Arjâsp had ordered horses-flesh as a dish (Mohl. French translation, small ed., IV. p. 432.).

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[1] *Ibid* p. 403, note t. *Vide* Curzon's Persia, Vol. I., p. 155, n. 1.

[2] La Perse, p. 461.